
The Queer Performativity and Sexual Orientation in Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man*

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Abstract

This research examines the queer performativity and sexual orientation in a novel entitled *A Single Man* by Christopher Isherwood. The main purpose of this study is to reveal the signs of homosexuality by the protagonist George. The queer studies analytical perspective is used to analyze how the writer constructs the sexual desire of the main character through several events. The study aims to scrutinize the queer performativity and sexual orientation of the main character as a flexible and indeterminate entity exactly in accordance with Butler's theory, besides, the writer uses Sedgwick's perspective that explains and describes sexual orientation and gender. The result of the analysis shows some symptoms that exist in George's character. Living with a different sexual orientation as homosexual is not an easy job when the surrounding is heterosexual society. The situation can create a confusion and over self-identity also an existence of life anxiety. This exhibits negative behavior towards homosexuals and excludes them from autonomously carrying out their identity and essence. This research can give the readers a deeper understanding of what the queer process idea in the field of literature or in the workplace, hence, this also can be a new idea for future readers who are interested in discussing homosexual or gay men's psychology.

Keywords: queer performativity, heteronormativity, sexual orientation

1. INTRODUCTION

A community that consists of homosexual that promotes equal treatment for same sex relationship is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) (Heist, 2016). American Psychological Association (2020) states that there are three kind of sexual orientation, which is bisexual, homosexual, and heterosexual. Heterosexual means person who has a sexual desire to the heterosexual, homosexual means person who has a sexual desire to same-sex and bisexual is person who has sexual desire to both sexes. The term of "homosexual" is used as a medical term for men who express sexual desire for other men, but in modern language the word homosexuality describes for men and women who likes to same sex (Martos et al., 2017).

Many of the facts include a real-life LGBTQ events can be narrated in the form of a literary work. There are so many things in life that can be managed as a plot component of literature. Literature is a form of life's copy. Thus, it can be said that literary work is an interpretation of life. Furthermore,

Eagleton says that when human fantasy is added in a story of human's life such as events and incidents, it will create literary works (Goulimari, 2015). Aristotle also contended and affirmed this as he said that literature is a work of progress of human life representation since literature contains a description of life of human being.

A Single Man is novel by American author, Christopher Isherwood, and it is said to be a response to LGBT movement nowadays. This novel is inspired by a true story. Isherwood is a best known author and an award-winning writer, editor, and teacher. *A Single Man* shows how a homosexual man expresses himself about his position in the contestation of the norm and his societies. Isherwood expresses the insecurity of gay men life due to the death of same-sex partner and the nationalists' sentiment of homosexuality. The novel explores the divisions, sexuality insecurities and legitimacy of homosexuals who are enforced to live in remote areas shown as an island type, independent of isolation and division (Yuksel, 2016).

Many studies analyzed the identity construction issues as their main focus. Zafira and Leiliyanti (Zafira & Leiliyanti, 2020) show the interest to analyze *Sexuality Construction in Cinderella Story: Ash Novel*. Gender activation and sexuality in homosexuality arise in a number of cases that bring the main character into questioning the masculine role and building her identity as the second most powerful mother. Putra and Olivia's (Putra & Olivia, 2020) study focuses on gender identity problems experienced by the main female characters in the graphic novel *Bingo Love: Hazel Johnson and Mari McCray*. The study aims to scrutiny the performativity of the main female characters in the novel through lesbian talk, physical appearances, and sexual activities under Butler's gender performativity perspectives. The results of the study show that the changes of the two characters can be identified by physical appearances, casual and romantic conversations, and physical and sexual interaction as well.

Khurosan (Khurosan, n.d.) examines Imarah Yakubian's book of *Alaa al-Awani* specifically in terms of gender performativity and sexuality aspects. The results of the study show that the Egyptian nation ruled by heteronormativity norm gave birth to homosexuality. People with 'deviant' sex and sexual habits' respond to follow-up, discussion or rejection. Anderson (2011) analyses *Warm blood and live semen and rich marrow and wholesome flesh!: A queer Ecological Reading of Christopher Isherwood's A Single Man*. According to Anderson (2011), this novel mainly tells on how it is traditionally read as a text that agrees with sexual relations of male and male relationships by empowering and normalizing those relationships in the long-term relationship. Forsell (2013) on the other hand also studied the characterization in Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* about Reminiscence in Layers. In his research, Forsell explores George's identity which consists of more than one. He tries to take a closer look at the details of the complexity of George's personality and characteristic values such as moods and occurrences during the day and the causes of changes experienced due to outside influences.

Unlike above studies, this study focuses on the investigation of the performativity of gender and sexual behavior in *A Single Man*. Presumably the heteronormativity dogma prevents characters with queer sexual orientation from coming out. What is interesting here is how performativity of these figures is shown in a social environment dominated by heteronormativity discourses. Hence, this present paper examines the queer performativity and sexual orientation in *A Single Man* by using Judith Butler's and Sedgwick's perspectives.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The data analysis is queer research analysis by applying Butler's and Sedgwick's theories. Butler states that true identity is incoherent or impermanent. Identity is obtained from performativity action, which is always changing. This is what Butler calls the unstable human identity. In interpreting identity, it can be determined by interpreting homosexual talk performativity, physical and appearance performativity, and sexual activity performances and so on. Sedgwick argues that the fact that homosexuality is considered a minority and their necessity to be divided into masculine or feminine, constitutes a very prominent distinction about homo-hetero in modern definitions and redefinitions of sexuality. Butler expressed his view of identity as something that is constructed and executed. Queer theory questions and challenges gender identification by arguing that not only gender (masculine and feminine) but gender (male / female) is a social construction.

Butler's queer theory actually stresses that the queer groups of people is a result of social construction where identity, gender, and sexuality can actually be changed according to the wishes of the individual himself. The statement that a person's identity never still reflects the freedom of oneself over the body of each person or more so how he is free to do anything to his body and is free to be anything (male or female) even if they want to change it. From this understanding, Butler's statement regarding this theory is conceptualized and practiced within performativity theory, namely an action or a performance which then undergoes changes in the body of each person being changed. It is an imitation of the original.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A Single Man is Christopher Isherwood's work which shows how a homosexual man expresses himself about his position in the opposition of the norm, his partners of sex and society. He expresses the insecurity due to the death of his same-sex partner and the nationalists' sentiment of homosexuality issues. Since the analysis singles out George's sexual identity performativity, it shows how George's journeys of being gay man in the novel which confront his being insecure, fragile, and lonely as being gay in the middle of heteronormative society.

3.1 George's Performative Nature Identity

Homosexuality is found in many nations around the world. However, it is still considered

shameful and threatening, even if it does not hurt others. While homosexual support is on the rise in America and is beginning to be accepted, stigma remains. The struggle in finding identity is introduced by the author through an interesting story in *A Single Man*. The novel presents a series of complex love life stories, inseparable from the realities of real life, as well as revealing moral contradictions in the characters in it.

Performativity, in Butler's idea, is a gender identity that is formed through roles, gestures, words and desires which includes performance which is influenced by the environment of each individual. It is then realized in an individual. The act of performativity does not stand alone, because it is influenced by the public, which makes an individual change in a direction that is more appropriate and comfortable according to him. That is the reason why Butler coins gender as a drag. The one which is more acceptable is the one which is desired by public : "... *Waking up begins with saying am and now...recognized I, and therefrom deduced I am, I am now*" (Isherwood, 1964:3)

In the novel, the expression "I" denotes subjectivity and existence. In the above quotation, it shows that George's gradual process of accepting the existence of himself has the negative response from his heterosexual environment. The step to realize the existence of being a homosexual in heterosexual norm is a long and winding process. Even when George looks himself in the mirror, he feels that he is not a part of being in an independent group:

Staring and staring into the mirror, it sees many faces within its face—the face of a child, the boy, the young man, the not-so-young man—all present still, preserved like fossils on superimposed layers, and, like fossils, dead. Their message to this live dying creature is: Look at us—we have died—what is there to be afraid of? (Isherwood, 1964:3).

From a performativity perspective, being put and set in the position is assumed when an individual performs intentional and unconscious repetitions, body projections, and displays of weird identity. When the individual is being out it is assumed that it also includes more than deliberate verbal declarations, although such declarations are certainly covered by this perspective. Butler argues that "... *there is no gender identity behind gender expression; that identity is performatively formed by 'expressions' which are said to be the results*" (Butler 1990: 34). Butler confirms that this is called as an expression or the appearance of an embodied identity, which of course cannot only be expressed in words but must be able to go beyond the limits of the discourse. It is expressed in performativity matters. Meanwhile, Sedgwick believes that what affects personal sexual identity is their partner, who and what their partner is, which gender attracts them romantically. This defines an individual's sexual orientation.

Butler again explained that someone has gained a fixed gender identity through a long process. he must feel this way by practicing and imitating it. What is meant by the practice of sex includes actions, gestures and desires. Then, naturally they understand and can confirm the existence of sexual identity.

This makes Butler think that gender is not something natural and essential (Butler 1990). A simultaneous and flexible process that is repeated will define gender itself. Butler's theory here is a gender standard that is usually practiced by Western culture in which the setting of the novel is set by Isherwood.

3.2 Existential Anxieties of Homosexuals in Heterosexual Hegemony

Existentialism can be defined as an individual effort to protect himself in vain by defining his intentions in the world. He has to express himself and expresses himself through contact with the world outside. Instead of being shaped by natural and social conditions, human behavior is freely expressed through this form of self-expression. Gay men express themselves and form their own wills, beliefs, expectations, ideas, opinions and feelings through interactions with the world outside. The world will justify and affirm their being gay and status. Thus, the power to reach the real person frees people from bondage. Blossnich, et al (2014) explained homosexual men often have more mental health problems and, as a group, are at a higher risk of having poor mental health outcomes compared to people of heterosexual. In *A Single Man*, George hides his being homosexual person and of his sexual orientation. He suffers of mental health problem, the insecurity, "... *The vagus nerve is irritated by fear. A sickening shrinking from what lies ahead, somewhere out there.*" (Isherwood, 1964:3)

Current studies explore the concept of abandonment as a prelude to stress and concern over the example of a gay community while controlling the number of people living with HIV and individual differences (Slimowicz, et al, 2020). In her theory, Butler said that sex is linked to sex as the cause of its binary structure, but that connection is also a cultural structure. Butler argues that an unbalanced connection between the gender and the sexes requires that the gender must be viewed differently from the other sex: the male is just as masculine as the non-female, and vice versa. Homosexual men with higher levels of rejection and higher levels may increase the risk of multiple mechanisms that may influence and contribute to the development of stress symptoms.

"And now George is experiencing something different. The face tightens and twitches again, the jaw muscles bulge slightly, the mouth tightens and twitches, the lips are drawn tightly in a grim line, and the eyebrows contract nervously. Although all of this is going on, the rest of the body is in a great state of relaxation. It seems to be separating itself more and more; becoming a different entity: an impassive, anonymous, willing, or selfish chauffeur, the very incarnation of physical coordination, lack of fear, a tactful silence that leads its master to work. (Isherwood, 1964:14)"

This reduction in the ability to manage the conditions associated with exposure stigma and discrimination can also undermine beliefs in order to deal with other difficult situations in human life. In addition, rejection is conditional and exposure to stigma and discrimination also combine to create other behavioral manifestations such as increased isolation, therefore leading to a decrease in available social support. This suggestion goes hand in hand with finding that degeneration is accompanied by depressive

symptoms. So, homosexual men have never done that a gender-sensitive status can have little social support (Slimowicz, et al, 2020).

According to Sedgwick's views of the construction of mind, gay men who can be free from real anxiety are men who can identify themselves, choosing not to obey the psychological imperative of building and understanding the supposed self-image of a normal society which they consider rigid. But this does not mean that they are completely free. They are still relegated to the social marginalization because their sexual orientation is considered "abnormal" and "queer", but psychologically they feel freer (Sedgwick 1990: 86). Homosexuals feel that they need to act fake in order to not be excluded from society. This is because heterosexual's culture has become the norm so that homosexuals perceive themselves as something strange (Yuksel 2016). Likewise, George gets into an unreal relationship and acts romantically in his office as well to take on unusual traits, resulting in his being regarded as a heterosexual person. "... moving beyond, into the realm of other people; and these other people must be able to recognize it. Its behavior must be satisfactory to them." (Isherwood, 1964:4)

This reduction in the ability to manage situations is related to stigma and discrimination. It may reduce the belief in using oneself to deal with other challenging situations in one's life. In addition, the sense of subjugation and exposure to stigma and discrimination can also be combined to create other behaviors such as increased isolation, thus leading to a reduction when there is public support (Slimowicz, et al, 2020). This suggestion is consistent with finding that diminished external conditions are associated with depressive symptoms. Thus, homosexual men who have not yet disclosed their sexual orientation may have little social support. This distinction also requires the bonds that bind heterosexuals when there is mutual attraction between heterosexual members. So, it can create gender diversity (Butler 1990). Butler then argues that there is no natural function in the body that identifies this, but society itself that discredits people who are deemed unsuitable and do not live up to gender expectations. When this happens, Butler points out that what is found more problematic is the cultural expectation itself, which Butler asserts as "*a concept that no one can combine*" (Butler 1990).

3.3 George's Intrapersonal Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity has always been an essential culture. It is considered natural and normal because of the history behind it. Culture and assumptions in society naturally define heterosexual as true. The underlying level of heteronormativity usually starts at the intrapersonal level. What is meant by intrapersonal is a situation that occurs when an individual is faced with free time, both psychological conditions and attributes. Intrapersonal heteronormativity for George is expressed as a series of negative subjective feelings, mostly fear, anxiety, shame, or surrender to personal moral and ethical values. Slimowicz, et al, (2020) argue that disagreement is associated with higher levels of a social concern for homosexual man. It is understandable that this representation would cover a wide range of symptoms of

anxiety. With this in mind, it could be taken into consideration that highly compassionate gay men could experience of being rejected, and that they experience the awareness of the impacts of the infection and the rejection of their being weird.

On the other hand, this process may include and cause misinterpretation and exaggeration of the risk of disaster and threatening events in all areas of gay men's life, thus increasing the general symptoms of anxiety. This happens to George when he is included in a minority group [alienated individual], which is of course a homosexual and pretending to be a member of a heterosexual society (Muhid, 2019). He thinks that his fear of a being different in terms of sexual orientation makes him unacceptable in the world of others. This causes him to feel separated and different. The communication that occurs in society is getting less and less. "... *He; has become more or less George - though still not the whole George they are demanding and ready to recognize*". And thus this forces George to stick with two personalities; namely his identity and also his true character. This is a complete denial as well as a cover or a mask.

For lesbian and gay identities, ethnic models of sexual identities which are minority and essentialist (according to Sedgwick, 1990), can be relied on and related to the legitimization of their status in society. In order to listen to the public, George must accept the selfishness that is considered to be organized according to the culture of the heterosexual. It is shown by his daily life routine. In living his daily life, George plays these two roles which are indirectly caused by the norms carried out by heteronormative style of life that of course pushes him to experience an anxiety which makes him to suffer a lot: "... *This figure [George] who sits alone at the small table in the narrow bed, humbly and dully eating his poached eggs, is he a life prisoner?*" (Isherwood, 1964:6)

George feels that he is not free and not being autonomous because he has to think of what heterosexual society views and considers right. Heterosexual society forces him to end and to ignore homosexual behavior which causes George to feel there were a big gap between him and his society. This causes the quality of life for homosexuals to decline their own life because they feel they are prevented from finding the true meaning of life and will not be able to get the life they expect, "... *George is embarrassed by his roaring because it isn't staged. He does lose his temper and later feels ashamed and sick to his stomach.*" (Isherwood, 1964:8)

Obviously, George is a hungry man in terms of relationship. He longs for the feeling of being a part of the whole thing he really wants in life, even though the whole connection is only a temporary matter. He makes it clear to his community; the way he thinks, his sexual orientation, and even his age have put him at a disadvantage. These feelings of dissatisfaction because of not being a part of the masses, leads him to give "education" to the group, where he attacks the human ideas of a minority society:

"Those with freckles, for example, are no longer considered a minority by many who aren't. They are not a minority in the way that we are discussing. And if they aren't, why aren't they? Since a minority

is only considered a minority when it poses an actual or imagined threat to the majority. And no hazard is ever entirely fictitious. Is there anybody else who disagrees? If you are, consider what this particular minority would do if it immediately were the government overnight. Do you get what I mean? Well, if you don't—think about it!" (Isherwood, 1964:31)

Appearances or outward appearances that look different or appear strange and abnormal are the source of negative emotions that occur. Forsell (2013) says in his research that the discriminatory attitude experienced by George and other homosexuals was largely the fault of society at large. This was implied when George read an article in the newspaper that exposes "The Sex Deviates", referring to homosexuality, he finds it funny that when the author of the article has such a deep resentment, he feels strange about his view of the people. However, the funny thing turned up into anger until George fantasizes about hurting and killing people who clearly expressed his dislike for homosexuals. The part of society that shows this dislike is the group that George considers as his "enemies".

3.4 George's Interpersonal Heteronormativity

Isherwood shows George's ongoing performance or transition between 'me' and 'him' by which it is put George's physiological make up to match the heteronormative society's expectation. This is a sense of alienation. Coining 'him' towards gay man is George's perfect mask. He denies of his true nature of being a part of gay and lesbian society. This is of course the impact of the public entities controls the private sector and do not allow George to expose his true homosexuality:

"George will have to be George in ten minutes; the George they have called and will remember. So, he now deliberately commits himself to thinking their emotions and being immersed in their mood. He quickly puts on the psychological makeup for this role he would play with the expertise of a veteran." (Isherwood, 1964:17)

Butler's conclusions about Gender are likely to undermine people's expectations of gender itself. Butler argues that if the structure of gender identity is a frequent and unseen repetition of actions and not seemingly flawless form perpetual behavior, it will be shown to be organized by repetitive actions that seek to measure the beauty of a larger identity, but which, at times, persistently, reveal temporary and permanent limitations end (Butler, 1990). Butler does not also make it clear whether the reader can identify the repetition of style. In that area people think about what process will force the re-examination of space and gender stability; kind of sex drive which will create and expose the gender process which resulted in damage to the level of identity and desire, are also questioned (Butler 1990). To some extent, this part has not been Butler's concern of gender identification process.

Splits and gaps present a pattern that hates the outside world. It adds to the pain of living because of the confusion between the mind and body in gay men's life. George's confusion of the real world which he considers to be another evil world is another challenge for his life journey as gay man. In George's view, the society he lives in is not for him but the world of other people's, which shows a mutual relationship between one's life and other people, not him. In a dialogue with other individuals, one

must have full awareness. There are many things that an individual should be aware of when dealing with or having dialogue with other people, the fact that they have feelings of their own is something that must always be considered. A person cannot change another person's ideas without hurting him. Therefore, it is necessary to completely accept the individual's being and existence. However, society has made George feel like a giant monster which should be defeated and killed. Mr. Stunk, who is a representative of the heterosexual society, excludes homosexuals in isolating them from society and says: "...*They're everywhere now; you can't walk into a nightclub, a men's toilet, or a public library without seeing a horrific sight. And they are both infected with syphilis. He claims that the current rules against them are much more lenient.*" (Isherwood, 1964:15).

To solve the problem of gender identity, Butler suggests that it needs something that reveals the behavior of that representation. Butler says the actions of the process "*produce the impact of an internal center or material, but on the body's surface*" (Butler, 1990). Butler argues that expression that is done with behavior such as actions, gestures, and certain conditions, are big lies that made and are supported by physical and emotional gestures. Any alternatives do not work in this way (Butler, 1990). If people think that story books are places to learn about the true meaning of gender and sexuality, then the most appropriate place to know and understand how to spread information about sexual orientation through culture to society is humor, perhaps even ideology and how those laws should be made. These conclusions are in line with what Butler has said in terms of how heterosexuality affects sexism when they talk about what they have found in the sex industry: "*In each case, they have portrayed sex as de facto heterosexual*" (Butler, 1990)

George accuses the heterosexual of Jim's death in both literal and figurative sense. Homosexuality removes homosexuality, as George states, they do not know Jim's personality and presence. Butler points out that these interconnected dramas reveal the flawed nature of perfection, generally traditionally constructed but non-existent. Butler said in her concept of performativity that when a person acts like moving his body, the creation of an interior illusion and the organization of the core gender is born when there is an action and body movement. An illusion can be achieved which then retained discursively, and then the goal is to maintain sexuality regulation within the mandatory framework of reproductive sexuality (Butler 1990). These are all interrelated in terms of heteronormativity. This also approves and affirms Butler's ideas that gender is only a fiction.

When George interacted with other people, he discovers the fact that there are two individuals who both have strong but different personalities. They are Charlotte and Kenny. These differences in the characters allow George to view a broader picture of himself during his interactions over a twenty-four-hour period. Charlotte and Kenny's opposites give rise to a different quality of perception of being oneself in George's personality and individuality.

3.5 George's Structural Heteronormativity

George's attitude towards heteronormativity is challenged by the context of the society in which he lives in. Usai et.al (2020) claim that there are set of rules in a certain place regarding can or cannot be done by people, especially those with different sexual orientation such as gay men or homosexuals and lesbians. It is because they are limited by certain regulation and law due to social norms and ethical. This is the idea of structural heteronormativity. Every action or behavior would be confronted to the society's expectation, since everything is structured and organized culturally. That is why George hates racial ideologies and even social norms, and thus he intends to destroy the "*independent moral agency*". It is shown when he gets offended when his position is threatened and is being insecure. He understands that people only perceive single idea:

“As a result, we must initiate a systematic terror program. To be successful, this would necessitate an organization of at least 500 highly skilled killers and torturers, all of whom are committed individuals... .. The killing will begin one minute after the deadline” (Isherwood, 1964:16)

George's attitude is identified by his intense concern for what others think of him. While other people are talking to him, his mind sticks into a strange interpretation where he is trying to figure out what is going on in another speaker's mind. However, not knowing exactly what others think of him, makes George thinks negatively about speech impediments to convey thoughts correctly. Speech, therefore, is an additional component that adds to George's perception of separation and the lack of a full life acceptance in his own life. As Sedgwick (Sedgwick, 1990) explains, when a pair of lovers who are both men can be manipulated, the potential for violence they can commit is at its highest, the prescription of the most intimate male bonding and the proscription of (the remarkably cognate) 'homosexuality' are both strong beyond whatever it is that exists in society absolutely.

George feels that he could not prove his existence in society, which resulted in him the feeling of angry and wanting to kill and torture them. George has a tough personality and social segregation so he is not satisfied and wants to eradicate heterosexual society. Because of this, George's whole personality is divided and he must hide his homosexual behavior. The fact that he is losing his relationship with the truth makes him feel worthless and confused because he is not stable. Because of his arrogance, he is a middle-aged man with a problem characterized by a different gender culture. This indicates that there has been a decline in his true identity.

Butler asserts that the use of the term "*subversive*" is usually used to reinforce heterosexual traits (sex for women) in homosexual relationships. Butler also explained that terms such as queens, butches, femmes, girls, even the parodic reappropriation of dyke, queer, and phage were the origin of the term's spread to denigrate and sexual orientation of minority individuals, namely homosexual identity (Butler,

1990). Butler argues that the presence of the heterosexual does not mean that those who choose to date the heterosexual in nature and origin is right (Butler, 1990)

The heterosexual culture deals with unusual traits that indicate the behavior of man and woman. They usually do not agree with minority as homosexual so that they limit the presence of minority. Heterosexual also is expected to become a pair to biologically create a human being so it has status and energy to preserve reproduction. Even though George is a part of minority that does not really fit in a standard and a custom of the society, he completely realizes and understands the power of being held by heterosexual community. Thus, George always pretends that he is a part of the majority community, heterosexual one.

As gender is a socially constructed concept, George views gender as a step that separates homosexuality from one of the causes of loss of independence and moral turmoil. George embraces homosexuality and behaves like a homosexual in public and yet being a homosexual when he is in what he considers personal. In places and times that he feels secretive, he can be himself, do things and find the people he fully needs. George tries to be notified by "other people" that he is a person who has a different sexual orientation and behavior, namely homosexual. While George is trying to do this, he is met by one of his students, Kenny, and he tries to make Kenny the "other person". The communication relationship that emerges between him and Kenny makes George not feel isolated, "... *It's a conversation. A conversation between two people... In reality, what matters most is that you are together in this relationship, not what you talk about.*" (Isherwood, 1964:74)

As Dawson (2014) said that it is rubbish and dehumanizing if there is a stereotype in the community because that allow the bigot create the reasons to hate them as the human and create misconception that could stay in society. Stereotype also can become something to generalize some group because one or two things say something negative about that. And then this project could open up some possibility of perspectives that one group cannot be generalized based on the behavior, character, and sexual orientation.

A real person wants to be free without compromising the rules and customs of the opposite sex ever since. "...*In our understanding, existentialism is a philosophy that makes human life possible; a doctrine that often affirms that every reality and every action mean both a world and a human subjectivity*" (Sartre, 1989). Existentialism can be described as an opportunity as opposed to irrational laws and customs because human existence is related to the opportunities which people tend to create or choose and "*man is a purpose to a special life*". Independent living reflects the ability of human beings to become independent beings who can exist and know their value in the world:

“I am alive, he tells himself. And life-energy, delight, and hunger rush into him. How wonderful it is to be in a body, even if it is a battered carcass, that still has warm blood, live sperm, rich marrow, and wholesome flesh!” (Isherwood, 1964:48)

George thinks that culture and ideology of heterosexual kill humanity and independence. In addition, the culture of the opposite sex provides an opportunity to live up to the world because people are surrounded by laws and social norms that are based on extraordinary values. George feels like an outsider because he does not think of himself as a living, complete, and independent person. He cannot act as what he really is when interacting with other people, nor can he feel himself like "at home" while living in this world. George always feels that he is not a complete person, which then leads him to experience the feelings of suffering from loneliness and isolation by circumstances. This attitude is violent even when it does not show physical violence. Such an action seems justified but its presence requires a commitment of stability. This can be considered as “... *dictatorial theft, violent and without physical violence*” (Butler, 2020).

George lives a life in the world filled with people in it but there is very limited and no meaning in relationship with those people. It causes George to have the problem of ontological security because he is a much-divided person. However, there are communities with a small number of members that can make George feels his presence. They are the homosexual community, “... *The ranks of The Living, the wonderful minority. They have no idea how unlucky they are... Yet George is aware of his... since he has just emerged from The Majority's icy existence...*” (Isherwood, 1964:48)

George always feels himself isolated and unable to communicate properly. One of the reasons why he feels that is George's nationality and sexuality. A different sexual orientation from most people makes George have to be satisfied with only relying on small interactions such as exchanging glances and short chats with men. Kenny is one of the students who at that time asks George to accompany him to the bookstore (Muhid, 2019). At that time Kenny wants to buy a pencil sharpener for George. That little thing makes George flattered. He feels that being bought a pencil sharpener denotes meaning as if he had been given a rose. (Isherwood, 1964)

A minority's violence is distinct. It openly challenges the majority to attack it. It despises the plurality for a reason, to be sure. It also despises other minorities because they are all competing: each argues that its sufferings are the worst and its wrongs are the darkest. And the more they both despise each other, the more they are persecuted, the nastier they get! Can you believe that being loved corrupts people? You do know it doesn't! Why does it make them feel good to be despised? (Isherwood, 1964:31)

Not all of the above quotations reveal his anti-minority interests, but it can be seen how much George feels resentful of his inability to become what is considered right in society. He always tries to be a part of something bigger but his efforts are always in vain. In the one hand, Jim's relationship is ended

in a big car accident that killed Jim. But on the other hand, George always feels that Jim is still alive, making him part of the weak, while those who have entered the realm of the dead were part of the masses.

At least, it is George's living part so he describes himself with the weak that he feels secure. The opposite sex views homosexuality as a personal problem or, as the book states, homosexuals are called beasts. Because homosexuality is a powerful fear, it destroys people's self-esteem: "... *Minorities are people who dress, behave, and think differently from us who have flaws we don't. We may resent how they look and behave, and we may despise their flaws.*" (Isherwood, 1964:31)

Because of this strong attraction and ideology, homosexuals are marginalized in society. They seek to undermine gender and cultural norms and practices for the sake of being accepted as a person. Sexuality is considered a barrier to elections and the possibility of independent participation. The practice of homosexuality distorts the concept of sex since the "... *sex is not known in nature but is obscure and is based on cultural advantages ... sex is something that is physically attached to a body, not something that is fixed over time of birth*" (Bentley, 2008)

When the story brings to an end, George ends up in his bedroom. The book concludes on George's thought breaking away from his physic, going back to the characterization of the biological mechanism that takes place in his body when he first falls asleep. Suddenly, George passes away of a heart attack while sleeping. In his life, George feels the frustration of not being able to get into the interaction with others and he also feels that he has a long life but unsuccessful to be a part of it. It is therefore heartwarming to realize that the only event he becomes a part of is '*the death*'.

4. CONCLUSION

The present study demonstrates that the performativity and sexual orientation are dramatically represented by George's character in *A Single Man*. The concept of queer performativity and sexual orientation as flexible and indeterminate entity are exactly in accordance with Butler's perspective of gender. The performativity and sexual orientation in this novel have been exhibited through the non-identity between sex and gender that have been emphasized. Gender theft emphasizes the fact that it is socially and culturally appropriate and can be reversed over time. The consequences of protesting against the rules have been evident in Butler's concern.

Being a homosexual in a heterosexual world is not easy. The novel takes place in late 50s and back then the LGBTQ community is not as big as the 21st century. Being a homosexual is a taboo and an unusual being. It can cause identity confusion and existential anxieties. People who is not familiar with homosexual in their circle can be shunned by society when they are performing their true identity and quintessence in everyday life. When the majority, which is a heterosexual, makes the minority, which is homosexual, doing life with the same principal as the majority, it is the same as judging and killing the

minority's individuality and subjectivity. The majority enforces their principal as the only true principal and this forces everyone in minority to agree with. So, the homosexual can be further apart from their own essence and limit their in-individuation process.

For George's case, being a queer who is living in a heterosexual society is a difficult choice considering it causes moral embarrassment and anxiety. It expresses bad feelings about homosexuals and separates him from his behavior independently. After conducting this research, it can be concluded that, to some extent, the meaning of Isherwood's *A Single Man* is more terrifying than the issue of homosexuality itself. This may be inferred since George may represent a homosexual individual in a large scale of homophobic society.

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